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MODERNISM

CARDINAL MERCIER, ARCHBISHOP OF MALINES.

MODERNISM

By CARDINAL MERCIER
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I.

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CATHOLICS AND NEUTRALITY.

RESPECTED PROFESSORS AND ESTEEMED STUDENTS,

Christians, priests, and even Bishops, too often drift in practice into a neutrality they would condemn in theory. It is indeed unquestionably true that neutrality is sometimes necessary. Problems of physics, chemistry, biology, and of social economy are never to be studied with the pre-conceived object of finding in them a confirmation of our religious beliefs.

To consider an object scientifically it must be mentally isolated if it is to be examined in all its bearings, and if its significance is to be grasped with precision and clearness.

Whenever the progress of thought (conditioned by the present division of labour) has called forth from the *pêle-mêle* of empiric observations a new science, it is because some man of genius has brought to light, from the

disorderly mass in which others have been groping, a new aspect of a truth until then unperceived. The older scholastics called this distinct aspect, which is the object of a new science, the "formal" object of this science. Hence, to consider a science from any point of view other than that of its "formal" object, is to consider it with an attention divided between this object and some problem involving another principle, or between this object and apologetics; and to reason thus is to disregard the essence of scientific speculation, and recede from that progress that every seeker of truth should follow.

MODERNISM, THE PHILOSOPHY OF KANT AND THE AGNOSTICS.

The Pope, in his Encyclical letter *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, quite rightly reminds us that most recent writings on biblical criticism and the history of our Faith are due to a philosophical inspiration which certain seekers after truth have too blindly obeyed, and which had an *a priori* influence on their use of historical documents.

Those who feel most the point of this

objection protest that they have honestly searched for truth without pre-supposing any system of philosophy in their scientific work. They forget a subtle distinction that the Holy Father has not overlooked: that is, that the intention which is known only to the supreme Judge, and will never be revealed until the last day, is one thing; and that the action that is subject to the judgment of authority and criticism, is another. One French critic, for example, studies and examines the Bible under the influence of Kant's teaching; another pious apologist unconsciously wears agnostic spectacles, as Molière's Jourdain spoke unconsciously in prose: like the Rector of a University, who was so fascinated by his system of Evolution, that he made it a scientific romance rather than a treatise on science.

Modernists have fed upon the philosophy of Kant and on agnosticism, and rashly assimilated English and German writings that are filled with infectious microbes. Victims of the contagion, they have had recourse to that fictitious remedy, "the philosophy of immanence," which only poisons and disintegrates the moral tissue. We do not blame Modernists who are in good faith for

catching infection; but we are justified in requiring them not to reproach the physician of souls for his antiseptic precautions, but to thank him. This is the least that can be expected of those who value immunity from contagion.

Because they cannot see the bacillus of Immanence with the naked eye, they accuse the physician of making a false diagnosis. Imprudent men, read again, I beg you, the *Riposta* you have irreverently addressed to the Supreme Authority. In the first paragraph you try to prove at length that your criticism is independent of your philosophy. Look, farther on, at these significant admissions: "We accept," you say, "the criticism of pure reason made by Kant and Spencer, but our apologetics are an effort to rid ourselves of their agnosticism. Therefore, to scientific knowledge of phenomena and to philosophic knowledge that has for its object the interpretation of the universe, we oppose religious knowledge which consists in an actual experience of the divine which operates within us." This experience of the divine you describe thus: "It occurs in the most obscure depths of our inner consciousness, and gives us a special understanding of

supernatural realities." Lastly, this is your conclusion: "It is true that our premises are drawn from the principles of Immanence because they all pre-suppose vital immanence"; but, you ask, "Is the principle of 'vital immanence' as noxious as the Encyclical supposes?" If this is not *a priori* reasoning, then there is no such thing.

THE CHURCH AND THOMIST PHILOSOPHY.

Gentlemen, it is just because the philosophy that forms our intellectual environment so easily influences our whole being that it is so important that the student and seeker after truth should be equipped with a sound philosophy. Yes, a philosophy that grips facts and holds fast to them when it is brought into play in the domain of metaphysics, where it soars to the absolute. The philosophy of Aristotle, developed and defined by St. Thomas Aquinas, has pre-eminently the characteristic of healthy, sound realism.

At first sight the interests of the Church would apparently incline her rather to the authority and the ideas of Plato, which make communion with the invisible more natural

and easy; but as we are formed of body and soul, she perceived that we must live on earth, and that experience alone can provide us with our intellectual equipment. You, too, who are Professors of Theology, have had to practice the objective method more rigorously and to study facts more calmly than any one else, and thus you have preserved your "Alma Mater" from the snares of Modernism, while securing for her the advantages of modern methods. You have been a great example to those who have wrongly identified their philosophy with science, and to those timid souls who sit quietly in the chimney corner while others more courageous bravely run the risk of burning their fingers in bringing them hot chestnuts to be cracked.

Pioneers of science, be on your guard against the a-priorism of the one and against—what shall I say?—the excessive caution of the others.

THE CATHOLIC SCIENTIST AND THE UNBELIEVING AGNOSTIC.

Whatever superficial unbelievers who understand nothing of the certitude of our religious beliefs may say of it, it is undoubtedly true

that, in proportion as the Christian's faith is sincere, in like measure is he or she free from the uncertainties that disturb the mind and paralyse the will.

The Catholic scientist is sure of the truth of his faith. Those who do not share his faith will perhaps say he is wrong : the fact remains that the Catholic is certain his faith does not deceive him, and that it cannot deceive him, and this certainty is fortified in proportion as his faith grows stronger. He is also certain, unquestionably certain, that the discovery of a new fact will never contradict his belief; therefore the Christian scientist who is disturbed as to the eventual future of science is lacking either in faith or in scientific knowledge, or in both.

The unbeliever, on the contrary, who has founded his philosophical and religious theories on the shifting sands of personal speculation or human authority, has no guarantee that they will not be destroyed by the next discovery. If his theories are sincere, so will be his desire to confirm them, his zeal to protect them, and hence all the stronger will be for him the *a priori* element that troubles the serenity of the scientific mind. And unbelievers, do not say that you have no system of philosophy ;

for every man who thinks has one, and I will not do you the injustice of believing that you will not allow yourselves to think.

I have recently glanced through the sometimes melancholy, and sometimes humorous, reflections of the English thinker, Harrison, who is intimately connected with the Positivist and Agnostic movement, latterly represented in England by Spencer, John Stuart Mill, Huxley, and Lewes. All these men, he observes, had their own religion. Have they not even defined the Unknowable?

The unknown multiplied by X, infinity, is the basis on which Spencer dares to say faith and science will be reconciled.

Oh! X, protect us, assist us, grant that we may become one with thee.

We will pass on, Gentlemen, repeating the words of St. Paul: *Evanuerunt in cogitationibus suis.* "They became vain in their thoughts." And by contrast we can better appreciate our privilege in possessing the certitude of faith.

CONCLUSIONS.

I return to you, dear Professors of Theology, who valiantly follow the true path,

digging each day your furrow, even though at the end of your career you will find you have only prepared the ground ; leaving to those who come after you, not only to sow the seed of hope in your soil, but even to gather in the harvest. We look to you to point out the way of Religious science to the Catholics of Belgium and even beyond our frontiers.

In the Academic solemnities you walk at the head of the professional corps ; the other faculties look to you : and the students in turn have their eyes fixed on their masters. All of you will continue to bear bravely and magnanimously the responsibility of example, for man is something more than a pure intelligence in the silence of the laboratory or the library, abstracting with labour a "formal object." In addition to the hours devoted to intellectual exercises, some time must be assigned to the harmonious development of all the powers of humanity, and of the still higher powers of the Christian soul. You would like to live to the full your Christian life : a life of piety, of charity, and of edification for Belgium and the Christian world ! Moreover, your hearts have moral aspirations, and having received in baptism

the principles of a superior life, Providence imposes upon you the law of acting in accordance with this belief.

You have also your duty to society, but the neutrality which scientific research imposes upon you would become culpable should you be so misled as to apply it to your practical life. To acquire science is not an end in itself. Duty ever comes before speculative reasoning; and the more a man increases his knowledge, the more is he responsible for his moral and social obligations, and for perceiving with pre-eminent clearness the true ideal of life. This ideal, Gentlemen, is none other than the one conceived for us by God; and we are proud to see how nobly our Professors have realised it.

II.

The Condemnation of Modernism.

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THE ENCYCLICAL.

Dearly Beloved Brethren,

On July 3rd, 1907, the Holy Father prepared a list of errors which, later, were grouped together under the name of Modernism, and condemned.

On the 8th of September following he addressed to the Catholic world an Encyclical of incomparable fulness, vigour, and clearness, in which he sets forth his reasons for condemning Modernism. Thank God! these errors, which have so far invaded France and Italy, attract few followers in Belgium. You have been preserved by the vigilance of your pastors, by an impartial scientific spirit, and by the Christian submission that animates the representatives of higher learning in your country.

Nevertheless, beloved brethren, I consider it a pastoral duty to bring to your knowledge this Pontifical Encyclical, which henceforth

will be known in ecclesiastical history by its introductory Latin words: "*Pascendi Domini gregis*," or, more briefly, "*Pascendi*."

Since the Holy Father addresses his letter to each Church in particular, that is, to the Bishops, priests, and Catholic laity, it is his intention that each one should individually profit by the Encyclical. The importance of this document, moreover, gives it an historic value: hence, those who are interested in our Mother, the Church, should know, at least in substance, its meaning. It is a well-known fact that scarcely had the Pope spoken, or rather before he had spoken, and from the moment that the telegraphic agents heralded his coming announcement, the unbelieving press began to misrepresent it, and the newspapers and reviews hostile to the Church in our country neither published the text nor the general tenour of the Encyclical with fulness or frankness. But with an eagerness and a harmony of opinion that altogether explain their attitude, they quibbled over the word Modernism in the endeavour to convince their confiding readers that the Pope condems modern thought, which in their ambiguous language signifies modern science and its methods.

This offensive and false impression of the Pope and his faithful followers has perhaps been shared by some amongst you, hence it is our earnest wish to remove this impression by explaining Modernism, and, in so doing, enlighten you as to the reasons that led to its condemnation by the Supreme Authority of the Church.

WHAT IS THE FUNDAMENTAL IDEA OF MODERNISM?

Modernism is not the modern expression of science, and consequently its condemnation is not the condemnation of science, of which we are so justly proud, nor the disapproval of its methods, which all Catholic scientists hold, and consider it an honour to teach and to practice.

Modernism consists essentially in affirming that the religious soul must draw from itself, from nothing but itself, the object and motive of its faith. It rejects all revelation imposed upon the conscience, and thus, as a necessary consequence, becomes the negation of the doctrinal authority of the Church established by Jesus Christ, and it denies, moreover, to the divinely constituted hierarchy the right to govern Christian society.

The better to understand the significance of this fundamental error, let us recall the teaching of the Catechism on the constitution and mission of the Catholic Church.

Christ did not represent Himself to the world as the head of a philosophy and uncertain of His teaching! He did not leave a modifiable system of opinions to the discussion of His disciples. On the contrary, strong in His divine wisdom and sovereign power, He pronounced, and imposed upon men the revealed word that assures eternal salvation, and indicated to them the unique way to attain it. He promulgated for them a code of morals, giving them certain helps without which it is impossible to put these precepts into practice. Grace, and the Sacraments which confer it upon us, or restore it to us, when, having sinned, we again find it through repentance, form together these helps, this economy of salvation. He instituted a Church, and as He had only a few years to dwell with us upon earth, He conferred His power upon His Apostles, and after them on their successors, the Pontiffs and Bishops. The Episcopate, in union with the Sovereign Pontiff, has then received and alone posesses the right to officially set forth

and comment upon the doctrines revealed by Christ: and it and he alone are empowered to denounce with authority errors that are incompatible with its teachings. The Christian is he who confides in the authority of the Church and sincerely accepts the doctrines that she proposes to his faith. He who repudiates or questions her authority, and in consequence rejects one or more of the truths he is required to believe, excludes himself from the ecclesiastical fold.

THE CHURCH AND THE MODERNISTS.

The excommunication pronounced by the Pope against wilful Modernists, which adversaries characterise as an act of despotism, is simple and natural, and in it we see only a question of loyalty.

Yes or no, do you believe in the divine authority of the Church? Do you accept outwardly and in the sincerity of your heart what in the name of Christ she commands? Do you consent to obey her? If so, she offers you her Sacraments, and undertakes to conduct you safely into the harbour of salvation. If not, then you deliberately sever

the tie that unites you to her, and break the bond consecrated by her grace. Before God and your conscience you no longer belong to her : no longer remain in obstinate hyprocrisy a pretended member of her fold. You cannot honestly pass yourself off as one of her sons, and as she cannot be a party to hypocrisy and sacrilege, she bids you, if you force her to it, to leave her ranks.

Of course she only repudiates you so long as you wish it yourself. The day you deplore having strayed from the fold, and return to recognise loyally her authority, she receives you with clemency, and treats you in the same way as the father of the prodigal son, who welcomed with tenderness his repentant child.

Such, then, is the constitution of the Church.

The Catholic Episcopate, of which the Pope is the head, is the heir of the apostolic college that teaches the Faithful the authentic Christian revelation.

And as the life of the entire organism is centred in the head, which directs its actions and arranges with order all its movements, so the Pope assures unity to the teaching Church; and each time that one of the Faithful,

even a Bishop, proclaims contrary doctrine, the Holy Father decides with Supreme Authority, and from that authority there is no appeal.

In fine, the entire question resolves itself into this: whenever a Christian is in doubt, he asks himself these two questions—What must I believe now? And why must I believe it?

The reply is this: I believe the teaching of the Catholic Bishops who are in accord with the Pope, and I am forced to believe it, because the Episcopate in union with the Pope is the organ that transmits to the Faithful the revealed teaching of Jesus Christ. Let me say in passing that this organ of transmission is no other than tradition, which the believing Christian must loyally accept and follow. Hence the Modernism condemned by the Pope is the negation of the Church's teaching, a simple truth you learnt as a child when preparing for your First Communion.

THE AFFINITY OF MODERNISM WITH PROTESTANTISM.

The generating ideas of the Modernist doctrine first saw light in Protestant Germany.

These ideas, however, became forthwith acclimatized in England, and several off-shoots have penetrated into the United States.

The spirit of Modernism has appeared in Catholic countries, where it manifests itself in the writings of certain authors who are forgetful of the traditions of the Church, and have shocked by the enormity of their errors loyal consciences faithful to their baptismal vows. This spirit has breathed over France, Italy has felt its blight, and some Catholics in England and Germany have suffered the infection. Belgium, happily, is one of the Catholic countries that has most successfully resisted its pernicious influence.

You understand, we make a difference between Modernist doctrines and the spirit that animates them. The doctrines disseminated in the philosophical, theological, exegetic and apologetic writings have been admirably systematized in the Encyclical *Pascendi*; and since it has been your privilege to escape their influence, it is hardly necessary to prove to you how completely these teachings are at variance with faith and sound philosophy.

But I dread even more for your souls the contagion of this spirit of Modernism, which is the outcome of Protestantism.

You know in what Protestantism consists. Luther questioned the right of the Church to teach the Christian world the revelations of Jesus Christ with authority. The Christian, he contends, is self-sufficient in his beliefs; he infers the elements of his faith from the Sacred Scriptures, which each man interprets directly under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. He does not admit the existence in the Church of a hierarchically-constituted authority which transmits faithfully to the world the revealed teaching, or that it has the right to interpret, or to claim to guard this teaching in its integrity.

This is the essential point in dispute between Catholicism and Protestantism. The Catholic contends that the faith of the Christian is communicated to the Faithful by an official organ of transmission: the Catholic Episcopate, and that faith is based on the acceptance of the authority of this organ. The Protestant says, on the contrary, that it is exclusively an affair of individual judgment based on the interpretation of the Bible. A Protestant Church is necessarily invisible, since it depends on the assumed agreement of individual consciences as to the meaning of Holy Scripture. Protestantism thus

formulated was condemned by the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, and the man does not exist who would dare to call himself a Protestant and think himself at the same time a Catholic.

But the spirit of Protestantism crept here and there into Catholic centres, and gave birth to conceptions wherein we find a mixture of sincere piety—the religious instincts of a Catholic soul and the intellectual errors of Protestantism.

Frederick Paulsen, Professor at the Rational Protestant University at Berlin, speaking of the Encyclical *Pascendi*, admits this strange fact. "It seems," he says, "that all the doctrines condemned by the Encyclical are of German origin, and yet there is hardly one theologian in Germany who defends Modernism in his own faculty of Theology."

This is most significant. But traces of the spirit of Protestantism in German University centres date further back than to-day.

When Pius IX called a General Council in 1869, a learned and well-known Catholic Professor at the University in Munich, Döllinger, who later openly fell away, writing *à propos* of the *rôle* of Bishops in

these Councils, says: "The Bishops must be present at the Council to bear witness to the faith of their respective dioceses; and the definitions that result from the Council must be the expression of collective beliefs."

Here you have, beloved brethren, the accord of the individual conscience substituted for the direction of authority.

THE SPIRIT OF MODERNISM IN F. TYRRELL'S WRITINGS.

The most intelligent observer of the contemporary Modernist movement and the most expressive of its tendency, he who has seized its true significance and who is perhaps the most profoundly imbued with its spirit, is the English priest, Father Tyrrell.

In the numerous writings published by him in the last ten years there is much that is edifying, much for which we are deeply grateful to the author: but often in the spirit which animates these same pages there is the fundamental error of Döllinger, the real principle of Protestantism.

This, however, is not surprising, inasmuch as Father Tyrrell is a convert, and was educated under Protestant influences.

Tyrrell, who was intent only on the interior workings of the conscience, neglectful of dogmatic traditions and ecclesiastical history, zealous above all to hold in the bosom of the Church those of our own contemporaries whom the blustering assertions of unbelievers disconcert (those unbelievers who, sometimes in the name of natural science, sometimes in the name of historical criticism, endeavour to impose philosophic prejudices and hypercritical conjectures as conclusions drawn from science in conflict with our Faith), has, after the lapse of forty years, renewed an attack analogous to that of the apostate Döllinger.

Revelation, he says, is not a doctrinal deposit confided to the guardianship of the teaching Church of which the Faithful will receive the authentic interpretations at various times when an authoritative announcement is required; it is the collective life of religious souls, or, rather, of every person of good will who aspires to an ideal above the material ambitions of the egotist. The Saints of Christianity are the *élite* of this invisible society, this communion of Saints. While the Religious life follows unswervingly its course in the depths of the Christian

conscience, "theological" beliefs work themselves out in the intelligence, express themselves in formulæ commanded by the needs of the moment, but less conformed to the living reality of faith according as they are dogmatically defined. The authority of the Roman Catholic Church interprets the interior life of the Faithful, recapitulates the product of the universal conscience, and announces it in the form of a dogma. But the true inner religious life remains the supreme guide in matters of faith and dogma.

Moreover, the force of the intelligence being subject to a thousand fluctuations, the code of belief varies; the dogmas of the Church in turn change their sense, if not necessarily their expression, according to the successive generations to whom she speaks. Nevertheless the Catholic Church remains one, and is faithful to its Founder; for since the time of Christ the same spirit of religion and holiness animates the successive generations of the Christian world, and all meet on the common ground, which in the main is the sentiment of filial piety to Our Father in heaven, love for humanity, and a universal brotherhood.

CAUSES THAT FAVOURED THE GROWTH OF MODERNISM.

Such, beloved brethren, is the soul of Modernism.

The leading idea of the system has been greatly influenced by the philosophy of Kant; a Protestant himself and author of a special theory in which the universal certitude of science is opposed to the exclusively personal certitude of religious sentiment. It has been without doubt this infatuation, as general as it is ill-considered, that attracts so many superior minds to apply arbitrarily and *a priori* to history, and especially to the history of the Holy Scriptures and our dogmatic beliefs, an hypothesis—the hypothesis of evolution—which, far from being a general law in the domain of human reasoning, has not been even proved in the limited field of the formation of animal and vegetable species. This idea in itself, which in the beginning inspired many generous champions of the Catholic apologetic school, and which later on plunged them into Modernism, is none other at bottom than Protestant individualism, which substitutes itself for the Catholic conception of a teaching authority

established by Jesus Christ, and charged with the mission of informing us what we are obliged to believe under pain of eternal damnation.

This spirit is everywhere in the atmosphere, and for this reason, no doubt, the Pope, specially guided by Divine Providence, addresses to the whole world an Encyclical, the doctrinal tenor of which concerns, it seems, but a fraction of the Catholics of France, England, and Italy.

The doctrines condemned by the Encyclical horrified faithful Christians by their mere announcement. But in the tendencies of Modernism there must be something seductive which seems to attract even honest minds, true to the faith of their baptism. Whence comes, and in what consists the charm that renders Modernism so attractive to youth? We see two principal causes, and these are the two errors I hope to dissipate in the second part of my pastoral letter.

PRETENDED ANTAGONISM BETWEEN PROGRESS AND THE CHURCH.

The unbelieving Press loudly proclaims

that the Pope, in condemning Modernism, puts himself in opposition to progress, and denies to Catholics the right to advance with the age. Deceived by this falsehood, which certain Catholics have imprudently believed, many right-minded and honest souls, until now faithful to the Church, waver, become discouraged, and imagine without reason that they cannot obey their Christian consciences and at the same time serve the cause of scientific progress.

It seems clearly my duty to reply to these calumnious accusations of a hostile press in an announcement addressed specially to the clergy, extracts from which they can make use of at their own discretion for the benefit of the Faithful. It is imperative, however, to convince men of good will in Belgium that, in being with the Pope against Modernism, they are not less with the times in promoting progress and in honouring Science.

Thanks be to God, the Belgian Catholics have escaped these Modernist heresies. The representatives of philosophical and theological teaching in our University, those in our free branches of studies, and those also in the Seminaries and Religious Congrega-

tions, have unanimously and spontaneously given weight to this declaration in a document signed by each one of them, in which they state that the Pope, by his courageous Encyclical, has saved the Faith and protected Science.

And these same signatories, have they not the right to proudly face their accusers, in the name of the Catholic institutions they represent, and to demand of them: What, then, is the science that we have not served, and that we will not serve, as well, if not better, than you? Do our Professors fear to be compared with yours? The pupils we educate, pitted by public competition against yours, do they not always carry off the honours?

The strength of conviction and the sincerity of love is tested by sacrifice. You know, perhaps, the liberality of the unbeliever in behalf of Science. This is true, and I rejoice in the fact, but I ask you without fear to compare it with the lavish generosity of millions of Catholic Belgians for all branches of learning.

THE UNCONSCIOUS ASSIMILATION OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH WITH MODERN POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS.

The second error—an error which takes advantage of the spirit of Modernism to infect the youth of our day, and sometimes also to draw away the masses—is the unconscious confusion of the constitution of the Catholic Church with the political organizations of modern society.

Under the Parliamentary system, each citizen is supposed to have a voice in the direction of public affairs: the revolutionary theories circulated by Rousseau, and adopted in the declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789, have disseminated in the masses a mistaken idea that the directing authority of the country is made up of the collective individual wills of the people; the representatives of power are thus considered delegates, whose exclusive *rôle* it is to interpret and turn to account the opinions and will of their constituents.

It is this conception of power that Döllinger wished to apply to the Bishops assembled in the Vatican Council. Later on, Father

Tyrrell applied it to the Bishops as well as the faithful ecclesiastics or laics of the Christian community, reserving only to the Bishops and even to the supreme authority of the Pope the right to put on record and to proclaim authentically what the dispersed members of the Christian family, nay, even what religious communities have thought, loved, and felt.

This analogy is false : civil society, following a natural law, is born of the union and co-operation of the wills of the members that compose it. But the supernatural society of the Church is essentially positive and external, and must be accepted by its members as it was organized by its divine Founder, and to Christ alone belongs the right to dictate to us His will.

Listen to the Son of God, made Man, giving His Apostles His sovereign and indefeasible instructions : "Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature." "He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be condemned." The Evangelist St. Mark, who quotes these words in the last page of his Gospel, concludes as follows : "And the Lord Jesus,

after He had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God. But they going forth preached everywhere; the Lord working withal, and confirming the word with signs that followed." Hence the Bishops continue the apostolic mission, and the Faithful must listen, believe, and obey their teaching under pain of eternal damnation. "If he will not hear the Church," says our Lord, "let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican," that is like unto a man without faith. "Amen, I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed in heaven."

THE CHRISTIAN MUST PROTECT HIS FAITH BY ENLIGHTENMENT.

Hold fast, dear Christians, to the cornerstone of your faith. Confide in your Bishop, who himself is supported by the Successor of Peter, the Bishop of Bishops, the immediate representative of the Son of God, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Protect with vigilance the treasure of your faith, without which nothing will profit you for eternity.

Perfect your religious instruction.

It is an astonishing fact that in proportion as the youth grows to manhood, he considers it almost a question of honour to develop his physical forces, to increase the measure of his knowledge, to strengthen his judgment, enrich his experience, to polish his language and refine his style, and better inform himself on the march of events. Man has at heart the perfection of his profession, and is there a lawyer, magistrate, doctor, or merchant who would not blush if forced to admit at forty that for the last twenty years he had added nothing to his store of knowledge?

And is it not a fact that if Catholics of twenty, thirty and forty years of age were interrogated, they would have to confess that since their First Communion they had not studied their religion, and perhaps have even now forgotten what they then learned?

In these troubled times I understand the conquests of unbelief, and I deplore them; but what seems more difficult to explain is that a believing, intelligent man, conscious of the value of that rare gift of Faith, is content to ignore what he believes, why he believes it, and what the solemn vows of baptism

pledged him to, towards God and his neighbour.

Every well educated man should have in his library a Catechism, if not to learn by heart, at least to study the text. The one most highly recommended is the Catechism of the Council of Trent, an admirable work in its clearness, precision and method, in which by the order of the Fathers of the Council of Trent, a commission of distinguished theologians was charged to condense the substance of faith and morals and the institutions of Christianity.

To instruct himself in the reasons for his belief the well-informed Catholic should have, beside his Catechism, a manual of the dogmatic teachings of the Church, and the principal Pontifical Encyclicals addressed to our generation, those of Leo XIII, of glorious memory, and the Encyclicals of Pius X.

All Catholics should have in their households, if not the integral text of the Bible, at least the New Testament, that is, the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. And they should have, moreover, a history of the Church and an apologetical treatise.

But to keep alive and nourish his piety

every Christian should possess a Roman Missal, and a treatise on the liturgy that will explain the ceremonies of the Mass and the principal manifestations of religious worship in the Church.

The Imitation of Christ, Bossuet's *Meditations on the Gospels*, and *The Introduction to a Devout Life*, by St. Francis of Sales, and, in addition to these, several lives of the Saints that represent to us the practical application of the teaching of the Gospel: these books form together at a very modest outlay the minimum religious library of a Christian family. Every family, however humble, ought to have several books of piety.

I have sometimes glanced at the libraries of friends following liberal careers, and noticed books of science, of literature, and profane history; but how often one searches in vain for any religious literature. Is it then surprising that minds so poorly equipped are easily taken in by an audaciously formulated objection: they are then horrified, and appeal to apologetics for help.

Apologetics have without doubt their place in the Church, and oppose a defence to every attack. When one is ill the physician is called in, but hygiene is more potent than the

doctor. Study for choice the statements and proofs of Catholic doctrine, penetrate yourself with its teachings and meditate on them, get to know the history of the Church, and learn her apostolic labours.

EXHORTATION TO PRAYER AND VIGILANCE.

Watch and pray! By the integrity of your life, by the purity of your morals, and by the humble confession of your dependence on God and your need of His merciful Providence, banish the interested motives for unbelief, and then will disappear, as mists before the sun, the doubts that rise in the soul and obscure the horizon. And if at times on some special point a doubt should trouble your conscience, have recourse to some enlightened man : the explanation he will give you will be adapted to your mentality and to your peculiar state of soul at that moment ; and will be more efficacious than replies indiscriminately addressed to a large crowd of listeners or readers.

None of us, dearly beloved brethren, sufficiently appreciates the gift of Faith. Man is so made that he takes no account

of what has definitely become part of his constitution. You have sight, hearing, good lungs, and a sound heart ; and do you often thank God for these blessings ? Ah ! if you were menaced with blindness, loss of hearing, tuberculosis or paralysis, how much greater would be your appreciation of the blessings that you seem on the point of losing, and how spontaneous would be your gratitude when you had recovered your sense of security.

The Protestant nations are sick, and for four centuries the leaven of free interpretation has been working in them : observe with what painful anxiety religious souls are being torn asunder by the thousand and one sects between whose conflicting claims they cannot come to a decision.

And it is just when devout Protestants are attacked by liberalism and tossed about by doubts, and appeal in despair to authority for help, crying : "Save us, O Lord, or we perish ! " that the Modernists would do away with the Chief who makes us the envy of our separated brethren, and invite us to renew an experiment that four lamentable centuries proclaim a failure.

No, beloved brethren, we will have

nothing to do with such a painful experiment. More closely than ever will we hold to the Vicar of Christ.

"I have a great mystery to preach to you," said Bossuet; "the mystery of the unity of the Church." United within by the Holy Spirit, she has still a common tie in her exterior Communion, and must remain united by a government wherein the authority of Christ is represented. This union guards unity, and under the seal of ecclesiastical government unity of mind is preserved.

The unity of Christian Faith is safe only in the Catholic Church, and the Catholic Church is only stable on the Chair of Peter.

"We will turn then," said St. Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, at the end of the second century, "to the most ancient of the Churches, known to all as the Church founded and constituted at Rome by the two glorious Apostles, Peter and Paul: we will prove that the traditions held by the Apostles, and the Faith they announced to men, have come to us by the regular succession of Bishops: and it will be a subject of confusion for all those who, either from vanity, blindness or bad feeling, take in

without discrimination all sorts of opinions that may happen to appeal to them ; for such is the superiority of the pre-eminence of the Church of Rome, that all the Churches, that is to say, the Faithful the world over, must be in accord with her, and the Faithful, wherever they may come from, will find intact in her the traditions of the Apostles."

III.

A Letter to the University of Madrid on the occasion of its Inauguration.

A Letter to the University of Madrid on the occasion of its Inauguration.

MALINES,
October 27th, 1909.

GENTLEMEN,—The date of the inauguration of your Catholic University recalls one of the most delightful moments of my life. It was at the end of October, 1882, when the Sovereign Pontiff, Leo XIII, decided to create in the University of Louvain a Chair of Thomist philosophy. For more than a quarter of a century traditional prejudice oppressed the faculties of Theology and Philosophy of the University. Kant's criticism of pure reason, of which few authors other than those in Belgium and France had made an original study, imposed upon too timid believers and thinkers, who were not in touch with the great mediæval traditions, a vague feeling of rational weakness.

They mistrusted human reason, and rather than venture on personal research they resigned themselves in desperation to profess with Kant that speculative reason is incapable of proving with certitude the existence of a God, and also the foundation of a superior order of metaphysical, moral and religious truths; and they thought, moreover, to silence their consciences by believing that Christian faith abundantly makes up for the shortcomings of philosophy.

This is the capital error!

Man is a subject in whom reason comes first. Neither faith, that reason has not previously justified, nor an individual or social morality supported exclusively by instinct or feeling, can be validly and firmly imposed upon the human conscience. Sooner or later it will be evident that those who have worked against speculative reason have given pledges to scepticism.

The times have changed, Gentlemen, since 1882, in the sense that Christian revelation, in which the theologians and philosophers of the schools of Bonald, La Mennais, Ventura, Ubaghs, Laforet sought refuge, is more and more unknown in the greater number of state Universi-

ties. Yet the times are not really changed; for the negative conclusions of the speculations of Kant weigh more heavily than ever upon those who in the most brilliant University centres give themselves to higher culture.

But now that the revelation of Christ has disappeared from the University horizon, the aspirations of the moral conscience, the need of an ideal, the law of joint responsibility between the individual and the community, and the need for action, offer the sole apparent city of refuge that remains indestructible on the summits of thought. Whence comes this demand of generous men whose voices plea throughout Germany and France, the Anglo-Saxon nations and Italy, this demand for "the moral ideal"? And we solemnly assemble to-day, Gentlemen, to substitute for this dream the real God, the God of Truth, in the temple of the Catholic University of Madrid. You understand that morality does not suffice for a being whose ruling quality is reason. And morality itself is but a tributary of truth, and consequently the predominating solicitude of him who is conscious of his *rôle* must be to accord to reason the first place in his thoughts, his

desires, and in the expansion of his activities in the search for truth.

You give, then, a prominent place in your programme—and in this you are right—to jurisprudence, politics, and sociology; but immediately after the place of honour that, as Christians, you reserve to the profouud study of your religion, you accord privileged rank to the study of speculative reason, *Estudio superior de filosofia.* Thus, Gentlemen, you do not fashion men of sentiment, destined to become to-morrow the prey of dilettantism, lost forces for the progress of civilisation, but you inspire your disciples with the worship of truth for itself, the disinterested worship of objective truth, no matter in what historical, philosophical, or scientific domain she offers herself to the consideration of the thinker.

Seek first the kingdom of God, said our Saviour in the Gospel, and all else will be added thereunto. I tell you also to seek humbly in the footsteps of your divine Master: seek, above all, truth, luminous convictions, the vigour of the intelligence; and the rest, that is morality, strong resolutions, strength of character, and consequently the way of happiness and unselfish devotion,

useful to your neighbour and Christian society, will be your honour and your recompense.

I will be with you in my thoughts and in my heart next Saturday, regretting extremely that the absorbing occupations of my pastoral ministry deprive me of the joy and satisfaction that the spectacle of your splendid initiative would have afforded me.

May Providence bless your young Academy! May you, penetrated with sentiments of the responsibilities that you assume to-day to your noble country, to the neighbouring nations that contemplate you with confident admiration, show in the future in spite of the objects that may cumber your path, as much courage as you have to-day given proof of generosity.

Your great Saint Teresa said—and I remember recalling these words to my audience at the inauguration of a course of philosophy at the University of Louvain—"In the conduct of an enterprise that conscience counsels or commands, there is only one thing to fear—that is, fear."

Weigh anchor, Gentlemen, unfurl your sails, take the helm, and under the safeguard

of your Christian faith steer with confidence away from the reefs, your eyes ever on the star of eternal truth.

THE END.

MERCIER, D.J.
Modernism.

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